

REMARKS

Claims 22-26 were presented for examination in the present application and remain pending upon entry of the instant amendment, which is respectfully requested.

Claims 24-26 were allowed. Claim 23 was indicated as being allowable, and, thus, has been amended into independent format by including the elements of base claim 22. Thus, claims 23-26 are in condition for issuance.

Claim 22 was finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 over U.S. Patent No. 5,374,088 to Moretti (Moretti).

The Final Office Action asserts that the “disposed about” element of claim 22, when given its broadest reasonable interpretation, does not just infer that the locking member has to be around the housing since the term “about” can mean “reasonably close to”.

The purpose of broad claim interpretation during examination is to completely explore the invention applicant claims and its relation to the prior art, to bring ambiguities to light, and to induce and allow applicant to clarify and delineate the claimed invention by amendment. *In re Zletz*, 893 F.2d 319, 321, 13 USPQ2d 1320, 1322 (Fed. Cir. 1989).

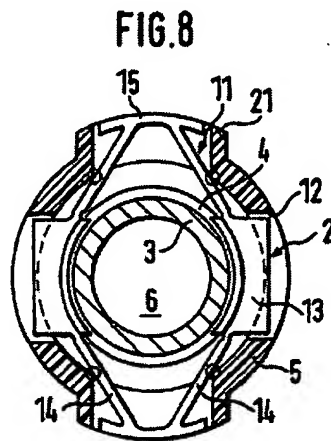
In addition to the definition of the term “about” offered by the Final Office Action, the term “about” can also mean “around the outside”. See Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.

In the interest of clarity and delineation of the invention, the “disposed about” element of independent claim 22 amended now recite “disposed around the outside”.

The present application provides that “[s]econd locking member 18 is positioned

over outer diameter 22 of connecting member 10 so that second locking tabs 48 are received by and extends inward of opening 36 of housing 15 as seen in FIG. 2". See paragraph [0036] and Figure 2 of the present application.

In contrast to amended claim 22, Moretti discloses a securing ring or element 2 that is inserted into a receiving space of housing 1. See col. 3, lines 58-60. Thus, Moretti discloses a securing element 2 in housing 1 as best seen in Figure 8, which is reproduced below for the convenience of the Examiner.



It is respectfully submitted that the securing element in the housing of Moretti does not disclose or suggest the locking member that is "disposed around the outside of said housing" of clarified claim 22. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection to claim 22 and passage of the instant application to issuance are respectfully requested.

Applicant respectfully requests entry of this amendment as permitted by 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 (a)(3). Specifically, the Office Action dated December 16, 2005 (the "First Office Action") never applied the Moretti reference to the "disposed about" element of claim 22. Rather, the First Office Action merely asserted that the locking member in Moretti "extends between the retaining rims A1, A2." See page 6, line 14 through page 7, line 6 of the First Office Action. Therefore, the First Office Action failed to meet the burden of establishing a prima facie case of anticipation of claim 22 in view

of Moretti, particularly in light of the "disposed about" element.

Applicant's response dated March 14, 2006 highlighted this failure by pointing out that Moretti failed to disclose the "disposed about" element. The final Office Action finally rejected claim 22 over Moretti using an interpretation of the "disposed about" element that was not present in the First Office Action.

Thus, the amendment to claim 22 provided herewith was necessitated by and was not earlier presented because of the failure of the First Office Action to meet the burden of establishing a prima facie case of anticipation of claim 22 in view of Moretti.

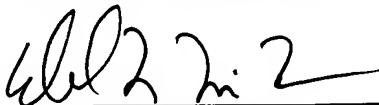
In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for issuance. Such action is solicited.

In the alternative, it is submitted that the instant amendment places the present application in better condition for appeal. Thus, entry of the amendment for purposes of appeal is respectfully requested.

If for any reason the Examiner feels that consultation with Applicant's attorney would be helpful in the advancement of the prosecution, the Examiner is invited to call the telephone number below.

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Respectfully submitted,



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